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A FEW WORDS

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Among all the Provinces of the Confederation, the Province of Quebec is, unfortunately, that which shows the least signs of progress. While the population of Nova Scotia increased 17 per cent, Ontario 16 per cent, and New Brunswick 13½ per cent, between 1861 and 1871, that of Quebec showed an increase of only 7 per cent. Our people have emigrated in great numbers to the United States, we do not attract anything like our fair proportion of the immigration from Europe, and in all the other evidences of material progress we are behind our neighbors. Yet the Province of Quebec has a fertile soil, a splendid climate, excellent water communications, an area greater than that of any of the older provinces of the Dominion, and everything which should serve to make its people progressive, prosperous and contented. To what then, can our want of progress be attributed? Principally, and almost entirely, to our imperfect means of communication. A farmer cannot be prosperous when he has to bring his produce from fifty to one hundred miles to market, spend half of his time on the way, and waste, in travelling expenses, at least one third of the value of what he sells. An immigrant will not settle on our wild lands, with no means of reaching the business centres, while he can go to the Western States, or Ontario, and settle on land with a railway at his door.

The only remedy for this state of affairs is to follow the example of the other Provinces, and do everything we can, within the limit of our means, to encourage the construction of railways.

A glance at the railway statistics of the United States and Canada, as given in the accompanying prospectus, will show how sadly deficient we are in this question of vital importance, and how marked that deficiency is in that portion of the Province which lies North of the River St. Lawrence. These figures shew that in 1872 the United States had a mile of railway in operation for every 37 square miles of area, while Ontario had one for every 51 square miles, Nova Scotia for 63, New Brunswick for 82, Quebec for 265, and the portion of the Province North of the St. Lawrence only one mile of railway for every 1584 square miles of area. But, it may be said, this portion of the Province has a large area of unsettled country, so the comparison is not a fair one. Well, let us take the proportion as regards population. Being similarly situated as to sparse population, we should have the same mileage, in proportion, as the Western States. They have a mile of railway for every 433 of population. This portion of the Province has one for every 5,529 inhabitants! Even after the completion of the North Shore and Northern Colonization roads, it will only have a mile for 1,296; or, in other words, the Western States will then have, in proportion to population, three miles of railway against one in this section of the Province of Quebec.

The annual increase of new railways in the United States, for three years, was, in 1870 5525 miles, in 1871 7779 miles, and in 1872 6427 miles. At the same rate of increase, they will double their present enormous railway system in less than ten years.

In these facts we can see the cause of the immense foreign immigration to the United States, while that to Canada is insignificant, and a reason why so many Canadians find profitable employment in that country.

Since 1867, when under Confederation the different Provinces obtained the control of their local affairs, and particularly of the important interest of railways, a better and more enterprising spirit has been manifested throughout the Dominion, and more particularly in the Province of Ontario. Our own Province has also done something towards encouraging new railways, but, unfortunately, on so small a scale that almost all the projected lines are at a

standstill. The spirit of railway enterprise, which has become so general in Canada within the last few years, and which promises to be productive of so much good to the country, may be said to owe its origin almost entirely to the Gosford Railway. Before that line was built, undertakings of the kind, except as Government works, were almost unknown in Canada, and particularly so in the Province of Quebec; but after that time numerous companies were incorporated, and a feeling created in favor of railways, to which even the great scheme of a Canadian road across the Continent may be attributed.

It would be an ungrateful return, then, to the men who have, at great personal sacrifice, constructed this experimental wooden railway, which has indirectly been the cause of such good results to the country, for Parliament to say that although wooden rails have not been found to answer, the country would not bear any share of the loss in an experiment undertaken for the general good.

If we are to make any progress in this Province a much more liberal policy must be decided on by Parliament. It seems well understood that we can afford to double the aid which the Legislature has heretofore given to railways, and only incur a debt half as large as we are able to pay the interest on.

The total public debt of the Dominion only amounts to \$35 per head of population, while in the United States, the Federal debt amounts to \$56, and the State debt to \$9 per head. It may be seen from these figures that it would be quite safe for us to spend a very large amount of money in developing the country by means of railways, and still have a very small debt per head as compared to that of the United States.

But the United States is not the only country in the world in which railways are making rapid progress. All over the Continent of Europe, in India, Japan, the Australian Colonies, New Zealand, and South Africa, this greatest of modern inventions is rendering the most remote places accessible to commerce and civilization. This is particularly the case in Russia, whose railway system bids fair to be second only to that of the United States, and this fact,

when we consider that her climate is the same as our own, or even more rigorous, should be sufficient to show that our deficiencies in this respect should not be attributed to climate.

While desirous of seeing a railway policy which will do equal justice to all portions of the Province, the Directors of the Lake St. John Railway think their enterprise is entitled to the particular consideration of Parliament. Its object is one which should have the sympathy and support of every lover of his country. It is to open up for settlement a fertile country, close to our very doors; a country which is adapted for the support of a large population, and which will, while giving homes and employment to our people, so many of whom now leave us to seek work elsewhere, make this portion of the Province something more than a fringe of settlement along the St. Lawrence. It will remove from isolation, and give a market to a population of over 20,000 persons in the Lake St. John District. This last of itself should be a sufficient reason for helping this enterprise liberally, particularly when it is considered that the Dominion is building 3,000 miles of railway to British Columbia, where the population is not greater than this.

The importance of the Lake St. John country, and the necessity of connecting it with the rest of the Province, have long been felt. As far back as 1828 the Parliament of Lower Canada appointed a commission to examine and report upon this back country, and their report, like every other since that time, was exceedingly favorable. A stronger proof could scarcely be found of the adaptability of this district for settlement, than the fact that the last census shows, for the County of Chicoutimi, an increase in population in ten years, from 10,478 to 17,493, or near 70 per cent, † and in agricultural products equal to 100 per

* NOTE.—In a telegram from St. Petersburg, dated 19th November, 1874, we read: "Navigation of the Neva is nearly closed for the winter. Ice is floating into the river from Lake Ladoga. The Bay of Cronstadt is frozen over, and communication by water is interrupted."

On the same day at Quebec, the River St. Lawrence was as clear of ice as in mid-summer, and there were no signs of the close of navigation. And yet St. Petersburg, 700 miles further north than Lake St. John (which is in about the same latitude as Vienna), is becoming a great railway centre.

† The population of the township of Roberval, on Lake St. John, increased from 266 in 1861 to 2,467 in 1871—over 900 per cent!

cent, a greater increase, probably, than that of any other portion of the Dominion.

The aid granted by the Provincial Government to this railway consists of a land grant of 10,000 acres per mile, with the option of exchanging it for a subsidy of \$2,500 per mile, payable in Provincial five per cent debentures. This grant has been found utterly inadequate as a basis on which to induce capitalists to furnish sufficient funds to complete the road, but should the Legislature meet the views of the Company, contracts will immediately be given for the sleepers and timber required for laying the first section with iron rails, and extending it to the flourishing parish, and village of St. Raymond. The work of reducing the grades on the present road, and grading the line from Gosford to St. Raymond, will be proceeded with in the early spring, and the first section will, it is hoped, be ready for traffic by September next; after which the location of the remaining sections of the road will be proceeded with.

An arrangement has been made by the Company with certain prominent capitalists of Quebec securing the funds required for the construction of the road upon the conditions set forth in the following letters:

Quebec, 10th November, 1873.

M. W. BABY, Esq.,

President,

Q. & L. St. J. R. R. Co.

SIR,

After consultation with our friends, either one of the following plans has been settled upon as the financial basis upon which the necessary capital to build the Quebec and Lake St. John Railway Company's Road, estimated at \$3,500,000, has been assured:

The Government to grant a Bonus of \$5,000 per mile of road; or

The Government to resume the land-grant of 1,200,000 acres made to the Company, and in lieu thereof to subscribe stock in the Company's capital to the extent of \$10,000 per mile of road:

The payments to be made *pro rata* for each and every ten miles of road built, and in Debentures bearing six per cent. interest.

I remain, Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

(Signed,) JOHN ROSS.

(True copy.)

M. W. BABY.

Quebec, 10th November, 1873.

M. W. BABY, Esq.,
President,

Q. & L. St. J. R. R. Co.

SIR,

After consultation with our friends, the following has been settled upon as the financial basis upon which the necessary capital to build the Quebec and Lake St. John Railway Company's Road, estimated at \$3,500,000, has been assured :

The Corporation of the City of Quebec to grant a Bonus of \$2,500 per mile of road :

The payments to be made *pro rata* for each and every ten miles of road built, and in Debentures bearing seven per cent. interest.

I remain, Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

(Signed,) JOHN ROSS.

Quebec, 10th February, 1874.

M. W. BABY, Esq.,
President,

Q. & L. St. J. R. R. Co.

SIR,

I beg to state, for the information of the Board of Directors of the Quebec and Lake St. John Railway Company,

that I am willing and prepared to undertake the construction of the first section of the Company's road to St. Raymond, immediately, upon being notified that the conditions laid down in my letters of the 10th November last have been accepted.

I have the honor to be,

Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

(Signed,)

JOHN ROSS.

These conditions certainly cannot be regarded as being otherwise than extremely liberal. The City of Quebec has agreed, subject to the sanction of the Legislature, to the stipulations which refer to it. It now rests with Parliament to do its share.

The Directors trust that this important scheme will receive the consideration which it deserves, and with which, they are confident, the Legislature, following the example set by the City of Quebec, will treat it.

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